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GRANT FUNDS EXPANSION OF PETS PROGRAM

Pet owners who rely on Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels for meals can also count on us to care for their pets. Thanks to a \$13,540 grant awarded to YMOW by Meals on Wheels America's We Love Pets program, YMOW's pet support program is expanding beyond food and cat litter to provide extended veterinary care and grooming to clients' furry friends.

"This funding allows our clients to enjoy their beloved companions without the stress or financial burden that comes from taking them to the vet or groomer," said Kelly Schwartz, Operations Director at YMOW.

Through partnerships with Humane Society of Huron Valley and mobile groomer Ruff Revolution, clients' pets will have access to nail trims, haircuts and baths, as well as necessary veterinary care.

Schwartz said a majority of the 300-plus homebound adults who receive meals from YMOW each year have incomes of less than \$1,000 a month. For them, the costs involved with owning a pet can be insurmountable. Yet the companionship and relief from isolation that pets provide can have physical and mental benefits for these neighbors, most of whom live alone.

"A pet is an important and beloved companion that provides a sense of purpose and a source of comfort," Schwartz said. Pet ownership also has been proven to lower blood pressure, relieve stress and lower the risk of depression, all of which are prevalent in the senior population.

Meals on Wheels America understands the importance of pets in the lives of seniors. A recent survey of Meals on Wheels clients nationwide revealed that 97% of pet-owning clients said their pet helped them to feel less lonely. But with nearly one in three clients reporting that they overlook their own needs to provide for their pet, the need for assistance is urgent and real.

With the support of Meals on Wheels America, YMOW is proud to play a part in helping clients to keep their pets healthy and happy.

Funding from Meals on Wheels America is made possible through their partnership with PetSmart Charities.

YMOW's Ani-Meals program has delivered pet food and cat litter to homebound pet owners since 2009. In 2020 we distributed 8,346 pounds of pet food to 68 cats and dogs, along with 3,360 pounds of cat litter.

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